

Everyone, I would like for you to please close your eyes for four seconds...

In just those few short seconds a single life has left our world. This life was lost in one of the many wars being fought around the globe. It wasn't necessarily the life of a soldier; the poor of the world suffer greatly from war as well.

I think everyone has heard a story that they are unable to forget. For me, it is the short story which I have just told you. I think about this story every time I hear the word "war". When I first heard it in the sixth grade, it made me quite sad, but it also made me think about the peace I have in my life and why others aren't so fortunate.

This year, Japan honored the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. Every time I heard about the war, I remembered that sad story from three years ago. I realized that if in four seconds one life is lost, in one hour that number rises to 900. In one day, 21,600. Do these numbers surprise you like they surprised me?

Of course, while I thought about these numbers, I also began to dream of peace and what might bring it to this world. In this moment, wars are being fought around the world, yet many places remain so peaceful. I began to wonder, "Why do some people use guns, bombs, and all of their strength to kill each other, while others use their mouths and words to discuss their problems?"

I couldn't find an answer, and, at the beginning of August, I decided to put these questions behind me. I was going to Australia to study English for two weeks, and I just wanted to have a good time.

In fact, I did have a good time, except for one day when I ran into a little trouble. I had decided to go shopping with a friend from China, but I had trouble understanding the cashier. I started to get confused, but my friend translated the cashier's English into simple English so I could understand. The cashier smiled and told me not to worry. "Being in a foreign country is hard, after all." I was so relieved when I heard this. She really seemed to understand me, and so did my friend, who knew first-hand about having trouble in a foreign country.

I came back from Australia a few days later on August 15th, the anniversary of World War II. I thought about my memories from the trip, but on that day I started to think again about war and peace.

When I was on the plane, with all of these thoughts and memories mixed in my head, that's when the idea came to me. I remembered my friend and the cashier. I remembered having trouble at the store and how they understood the experience I was going through before I even said anything. Someone who didn't understand may have become angry or annoyed, but they were kind. Communication, I discovered, is about more than just language and speaking. It's also about the shared experiences that help us understand each other without speaking a word.

The answer to my questions from before started to become clear. When individuals fight or nations go to war it is because they can't truly communicate with one another. Without sharing or knowing each other's experiences, how could they reach a real understanding?

To make peace around the world, I believe all of us must try to improve international understanding. We can do this by meeting new people and speaking, listening, and sharing with them to establish real communication and bridges between cultures. No one can do it alone, so we all must make a small contribution. It may seem like it's just a dream, but I think it's very real. Together, if we can learn to understand one another, we can each take one small step towards making peace around the world.